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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - HURRICANE KATRINA

IRAQ

PARIS - THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 01, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

- [1](#)1. HURRICANE KATRINA
- [1](#)2. IRAQ

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

TWO HUMAN TRAGEDIES, CAUSED BY TWO DEVASTATING FORCES, NATURE AND RUMOR, SHARE TOP BILLING IN TODAY'S HEADLINES: HURRICANE KATRINA AND YESTERDAY'S DEADLY STAMPEDE DURING A PILGRIMAGE IN BAGHDAD. CATHOLIC LA CROIX CARRIES A DOUBLE FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE: "DEADLY PANIC ON A BAGHDAD BRIDGE" AND "KATRINA DEVASTATES THE AMERICAN SOUTH EAST." THE EDITORIAL BY DOMINIQUE QUINIO, TITLED "TRAGEDIES" POINTS TO THE "STRANGE GEOGRAPHICAL TELESCOPING OF EVENTS WHICH HAS BROUGHT TOGETHER IRAQ AND THE U.S." COMMENTARIES EMPHASIZE AMERICA'S INABILITY TO PREDICT AND PROTECT, "IN SPITE OF ITS HIGH TECHNOLOGY." "A COLOSSUS WITH FEET OF CLAY" SAYS LA CROIX; "THE GREATEST NATION IN THE WORLD KNOCKED OUT BY NATURE" WRITES LIBERATION. LE FIGARO TITLES ITS EDITORIAL "AMERICA TRAPPED." (SEE PART C)

THE SECOND MAJOR FRONT-PAGE STORY, THE DEADLY STAMPEDE IN BAGHDAD WHICH CAUSED THE DEATH OF SOME ONE THOUSAND IRAQIS ACCORDING TO LE FIGARO, IS ANALYZED IN THE CONTEXT OF IRAQ'S SECURITY SITUATION. FOR GEORGE MALBRUNO, RUMOR, WHICH HAS ALWAYS PLAYED A ROLE IN SADDAM'S DAYS, WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE TRAGEDY. (SEE PART C)

LIBERATION INTERVIEWS BAKHTIAR AMINE, A FORMER MEMBER OF IRAQ'S ALLAOUI GOVERNMENT: "SINCE SADDAMISTS AND TERRORIST WERE KEPT FROM ENTERING THE PILGRIMS' ZONE BY THE SECURITY POLICE, THEY USED THE RUMOR OF A SUICIDE BOMB TO CAUSE HARM. THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR TERRORIST ATTACKS IN IRAQ, CALLED BY SOME FOREIGN MEDIA RESISTANT FIGHTERS, ARE NOTHING MORE THAN ENEMIES OF ALL IRAQIS, WHATEVER THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS." FRANCE SOIR INTERVIEWS DOMINIQUE THOMAS, A MIDDLE EAST EXPERT: "THE RECENT NEGOTIATIONS ON THE CONSTITUTION HAVE PROVEN THAT TODAY'S IRAQ COULD BE BUILT WITHOUT THE SUNNIS. THAT WOULD BE VERY DANGEROUS. THE SUNNIS COULD EASILY AND PERMANENTLY PLUNGE INTO AN ARMED CONFLICT. THE AMERICANS INTERVENED IN IRAQ WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. THEY ARE NOW CAUGHT IN A BIND. TODAY THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FUTURE OF IRAQ. THEY CANNOT LEAVE."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

HURRICANE KATRINA

"AMERICA TRAPPED"

PIERRE ROUSSELIN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (09/1): "THE DAMAGE LEFT BY HURRICANE KATRINA IS UNPRECEDENTED. SURPRISE AND CONSTERNATION HAVE TAKEN OVER. FIRST AND FOREMOST KATRINA IS A HUMAN TRAGEDY, WHICH ILLUSTRATES ONCE AGAIN OUR INABILITY TO FIGHT AGAINST NATURE'S UNLEASHED RAVAGES. USED TO HURRICANES, THE MOST POWERFUL NATION IN THE WORLD IS SUDDENLY AS POWERLESS AS WAS SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE FACE OF THE TSUNAMI. WHILE THE TSUNAMI WAS EXCEPTIONAL, IT MAY BE THAT IN THIS INSTANCE THE ROUTINE OF THE HURRICANE SEASON LED OFFICIALS TO UNDERESTIMATE KATRINA'S STRENGTH. THE AREA HIT BY THE HURRICANE IS A NERVE CENTER FOR AMERICA. THE TRAGEDY HAS HIT AT THE WORST POSSIBLE MOMENT, WHEN THE BARREL OF OIL HAS ALREADY HIT THE 70-DOLLAR MARK. THE U.S. COULD BE FACING A GAS SHORTAGE. THE AUTHORITIES, WHO WANT TO BE REASSURING, QUICKLY ANNOUNCED AN EMERGENCY PLAN AND THE AVAILABILITY OF STRATEGIC OIL RESERVES, IN THE HOPES OF MAKING A PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT AND KEEPING MARKETS FROM OVERREACTING. THE PRESENT CATASTROPHE COULD HAVE LONG-LASTING CONSEQUENCES ON THE AMERICAN ECONOMY. WHAT IS MOST SURPRISING IS THAT IN A COUNTRY AS MODERN AS THE U.S., THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DEVASTATION IS STILL LARGELY UNKNOWN TWO DAYS AFTER THE TRAGEDY."

"TRAGEDIES"

DOMINIQUE QUINION IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (09/01): "IN SPITE OF ITS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION, ITS TECHNOLOGICAL AND FINANCIAL MEANS, IN SPITE OF ITS POWER, THE COLOSSUS REVEALED IT HAS FEET OF CLAY WHEN IT COMES TO FIGHTING AGAINST NATURE."

"THE LAWS OF THE SKIES AND OF THE JUNGLE"

PATRICK SABATIER IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (09/01): "THIS MAJOR CRISIS . HAS LED PRESIDENT BUSH TO SHORTEN HIS SUMMER VACATION AND TO RETURN TO WASHINGTON. NEW ORLEANS WILL REMAIN A GHOST TOWN FOR MONTHS. WHAT IS MOST STRIKING AND MOST REVEALING IS THE BRUTAL COLLAPSE OF A HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED AND DEVELOPED SOCIETY. THE MOST POWERFUL NATION IN THE WORLD KNOCKED OUT BY A BLOW THAT CAME FROM THE SKIES AND THE OCEAN. THE AUTHORITIES, BOTH LOCAL AND FEDERAL, AT A LOSS, WADE THROUGH THE RISING WATERS. AND VIOLENCE, WHICH IS NEVER VERY FAR IN A REGION WHERE POVERTY IS OFTEN ENDEMIC, IS TAKING OVER, PUNCTUATED BY LOOTING. AFTER THE LAWS OF THE SKIES, THE LAWS OF THE JUNGLE ARE TAKING OVER."

IRAQ

"THE DEVASTATING FORCE OF RUMOR"

GEORGE MALBRUNO IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (09/01): "AT THE ROOT OF YESTERDAY'S TRAGEDY, RUMOR. RUMOR IS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF AN IRAQI SOCIETY EXTENUATED BY VIOLENCE AFTER HAVING BEEN DOMINATED BY THE CONSTRAINTS OF A DICTATORSHIP. UNDER SADDAM RUMOR WAS A STRATEGIC WEAPON USED FOR DISSIMULATION. TODAY, IN A COUNTRY SHAKEN BY THE SETTLING OF SCORES AND REPEATED TERRORIST ATTACKS, UNVERIFIED INFORMATION, PLOTTING AND A DOSE OF IRRATIONALITY HAVE HELPED TO WIDEN THE GAP THAT SEPARATES THE SUNNI AND SHIITE COMMUNITIES. THE SUNNI INSURGENTS TELL WHOEVER WILL LISTEN THAT THE SHIITES ARE ALL IN CAHOOTS WITH IRAN'S SHIITE COMMUNITY. AND THE SHIITES ACCUSE ALL SUNNIS OF HAVING BAATHIST CONNECTIONS."

"TRAGEDIES"

DOMINIQUE QUINIO IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (09/01): "ALL OF IRAQ'S ILLS CAME TOGETHER DURING A PARTICULARLY MURDEROUS DAY. RUMOR CAUSED A MOVEMENT OF PANIC THAT LEFT OVER 800 DEAD. A STRANGE GEOGRAPHICAL TELESCOPING OF EVENTS BROUGHT TOGETHER POOR EXTENUATED IRAQ AND THE U.S." STAPLETON